

REMARKS / ARGUMENTS

Claims 3-6 remain pending in this application, as claims 1 and 2 have been cancelled without prejudice by the present amendment.

All of the features of claims 1 and 2 have been incorporated in the amended claim 3, which has been made independent. The dependencies of claims 4 and 5 have been changed accordingly.

The objections to claim 1 (lack of antecedent as noted by the Examiner under items 1 and 2 of the Office Action) have been appropriately addressed in the amended claim 3.

Claims 1-6 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Jackson (US 2,282,189) in view of Brink (US 2,707,451), Glennon (US 1,809,934), and Hwang (US 5,610,577). To support the rejection, the Examiner attempts to read each claim feature by itself on a selected drawing figure of one of the cited references and asserts that the invention of claim 1 could have been achieved as an obvious combination of these references.

Applicants respectfully disagree with the Examiner for at least the following reasons: With regard to claim 1, the Examiner cites Jackson's Fig. 4, elements 39, 42, 40 and 50 as a reference for wheel/pinion pairs which follow each other in sequence, where the pinion gear of each pair is engaged in the gear wheel of the next pair. The

Examiner further cites Hwang's Figure 4, element 6 as a reference for gear wheels of equal diameter. The Examiner asserts that it would have been obvious to use the equal gear diameters of Hwang with the device of Jackson. However, if one were to follow the Examiner's suggestion and configure Jackson's wheel/pinion pairs 39/42 and 40/50 with identical diameters, one would find that the two pairs immobilize each other because the pinion 42 would mesh with the gear wheel 40 while the pinion 50, in turn, would mesh with the gear wheel 39. Thus, a combination of Hwang ('577) with Jackson ('189) proves to be unworkable. Accordingly, the rejection of claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Jackson (US 2,282,189) in view of Brink (US 2,707,451), Glennon (US 1,809,934), and Hwang (US 5,610,577) should be withdrawn and claim 1 should be allowed.

Nevertheless, Applicants have chosen to combine the original claims 1, 2 and 3 in an amended claim 3 as presented herein, because this combination meets the stated objects of the invention to an extent that can simply not be matched by the cited references, whether they are used individually or in any conceivable combination. Specifically, according to page 2, lines 15 to 19 of the specification, the device must "be suitable for integration into existing systems even under the severest installation constraints, for example in steering mechanisms of automobiles, and be manufacturable with low tooling costs and an inventory of fewer different parts." An example of what is meant by "severest installation constraints" is very clearly illustrated in Figure 2 as well as explained in the specification, page 6, last line, to page 7, line 5: "The base plate 15 and the cover plate 16 can be configured as two housing halves spaced from each other at only a very small distance. For example, the inside profile

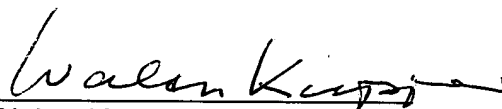
height H between the housing halves could be equal to 1.5 times the hub diameter D of the wheel/pinion pairs."

Based on the foregoing arguments, Applicants respectfully submit that independent claim 3 (as currently amended) should be allowed, and that claims 4-6 should be allowed by virtue of being dependent on claim 3.

Allowance of the present application with claims 3-6 is hereby earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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